

In accordance with a recently adopted amendment to the Constitution, respecting the offices of Secretary and Treasurer, it became necessary to elect a new Treasurer. The election for officers resulted in the choice of Mr. Charles B. Cory, for Treasurer, and the re-election of the previous incumbents.

After a very satisfactory two days' session, the Union adjourned to meet in Washington, the third Tuesday in November, 1886. The only regret seemed to be that the session was not allowed to occupy another day, a regret especially shared by members who had made a long journey to attend the meeting. A pleasant feature of the occasion was the presence of a number of Associate Members, and their active participation in the proceedings of the Congress. As less time will be necessary in future than heretofore for routine business and reports of Committees, future meetings will doubtless be devoted more largely to scientific papers, the presentation and discussion of which, it is already evident, will form an attractive feature of these annual gatherings of the American Ornithologists' Union.

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## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Murdoch on the Birds of Point Barrow, Alaska.**—Of the 'Report of the International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska.'\* recently published by order of Congress, the report on the 'Natural History,' by Mr. John Murdoch, occupies upwards of one hundred pages, of which twenty-three (pp. 105-128) are devoted to birds. Of the 54 species noted, 42 are water birds. With few exceptions, all were collected "within a circle of fifteen miles from the station at Point Barrow." There is, however, a supplemental list (p. 200) of 18 species "noticed at Plover Bay, Eastern Siberia, August 21 to 25, 1881." The period of observation at Point Barrow covered very nearly two full years. Considering that the locality is at the northern extremity of this continent, in latitude  $71^{\circ} 16'$  north, and far remote from any other where continuous observations have been made for any consid-

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\* Report of the International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska, in response to the Resolution of the House of Representatives of December 11, 1884. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885. 4to, pp. 695, map, and numerous plates, mostly unnumbered. Part IV, Natural History. By John Murdoch, A. M., Sergeant Signal Corps, U. S. Army. Pp. 89-200.

erable period, Mr. Murdoch's report on the ornithology is necessarily one of high importance, through the light it throws upon the distribution of birds in the 'High North.' The report consists almost wholly of field notes, ranging, with different species, from a few lines to a page or two. Detailed descriptions, however, are given of the adult and immature plumages of the rare *Rhodostethia rosea* (Ross's Gull), and also two colored plates, illustrating respectively the adult male in winter plumage, and a young female in the first autumnal plumage. The expedition "succeeded in obtaining a large series of this rare and beautiful bird—more, in fact, than there were before in all the museums of the world—and a still larger series might have been obtained had the weather and other conditions been favorable. . . . In 1881, from September 28 to October 22, there were days when they were exceedingly abundant in small flocks—generally moving towards the northeast—either flying over the sea or making short excursions inshore. Not a single one was seen during the spring migrations or in the summer, but two or three stragglers were noticed early in September—a few out among the loose pack-ice—and on September 21, 1882, they were again abundant, apparently almost all young birds. They appeared in large, loose flocks, coming in from the sea and from the southwest, all apparently traveling to the northeast. Most of the flocks whirled in at the mouth of our lagoon and circled round the stations with a peculiarly graceful, wavering flight, and many were shot close to the house. A cold easterly wind was blowing at the time. They continued plenty for several days—while the east wind blew—all following the same track, moving up the shore, and making short excursions inland at each of the beach lagoons. After September 28 they disappeared until October 6, when for several days there was a large flight. On October 9, in particular, there was a continuous stream of them all day long moving up the shore a short distance from the beach, and occasionally swinging in over the land. *None were seen to return*" (pp. 123, 124). The birds are simply autumn visitors to Point Barrow, which is the only locality where they have been observed in abundance.

The King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) is said to be "the most abundant bird at Point Barrow," and quite a long and detailed account is given of its habits. The Pectoral Sandpiper (*Tringa maculata*) was also found to be a very abundant species, and we have here the first account of its eggs and breeding habits. "The nest is always built in the grass, with a decided preference for high and dry localities like the banks of gullies and streams. It was sometimes placed at the edge of a small pool, but always in grass and in a dry place, never in the black clay and moss, like the Plover and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, or in the marsh, like the Phalaropes. The nest was like that of the other waders, a depression in the ground lined with a little grass." The complete sets of eggs found always contained four, of the usual pointedly pyriform shape of those of other Sandpipers. Eighteen sets were examined. In color the eggs greatly resemble those of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Very full and interesting notes are given respecting many other species.

but lack of space forbids a more extended notice of this important contribution, which is only one of a series of highly valuable reports by the same author upon the animals and plants obtained in the vicinity of Point Barrow. The Commander of the Expedition, P. H. Ray, First Lieutenant Eight U. S. Infantry, especially acknowledges the able and valuable assistance rendered by Mr. Murdoch throughout this eminently successful expedition.—J. A. A.

**The 'Water Birds of North America'—A Few Corrections.**—The excellent and exhaustive work on the 'Water Birds of North America,' lately issued by the Agassiz Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, is a model treatise as far as the labors of the authors whose names appear on the title-page could make it perfect; and for errors in quotations from others, chiefly compiled by the late Dr. Brewer, neither he, Professor Baird, nor Mr. Ridgway can be held responsible.

It is, however, an unfortunate circumstance that while so many are indirectly made contributors, they should have been unable to amend their notes when printed, as there is always new information accumulating, which more or less alters previous knowledge, especially in regard to habits of birds. It was probably impracticable to supply proof-sheets to all the naturalists quoted and still living while the printing was being done. In consequence, a large number of amendments and additions must remain for publication in other ways, the editors not having seen fit to add an appendix, as done with the three volumes of 'Land Birds.' The following corrections will be of interest, and relate chiefly to quotations from my own writings. I do not now undertake to give many additional observations.

In volume I, page 75, line 2, '*tule*' should be printed *tulé*, it being the Spanish or Mexican name of the giant rush, *Scirpus lacustris*.—not properly speaking a "long grass." In Utah it is spelled Tooele, the lake thus named being within the range of Spanish travel, but should be pronounced Too-ly, in two syllables.

Page 115, line 3, for 'sport' read spout.

Page 116, line 10. *H. niger* breeds as far south as Santa Barbara Island. See quotation on next page, line 8.

Page 117, line 22 from bottom, for 'Malashka' read Unalaska.

Page 146, line 19 from bottom, for 'California' read Caledonia.

Page 233, near middle, Dr. Brewer overlooked my article in Proc. Cal. Acad. Nat. Sc., IV, 3, 1868, where I stated this species to be "not rare at San Francisco Bay in winter." The same article would have furnished other facts on 45 species of birds, chiefly additional to what he did quote.

Page 298, line 12, for 'western,' read eastern.

Page 320, line 6. The young birds I caught were probably *Limosa fedoa* (p. 255), which are described as very similar to the young of *Numenius* when not half grown. It is my recollection, however, that old Curlews were shot also, possibly barren birds. On p. 312 he also quotes my notice of *N. longirostris* in the same locality, but no other collector has found it breeding there.